POEMS

OF THE

IRISH REVOLUTIONARY BROTHERHOOD

THOMAS MacDONAGH

P. H. PEARSE
(PADRAIC MacPIARAIS)

JOSEPH MARY PLUNKETT

SIR ROGER CASEMENT

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Edited by
PADRAIC COLUM
AND
EDWARD J. O'BRIEN

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INTRODUCTION

The years that brought maturity to the three poets who were foremost to sign, and foremost to take arms to assert, Ireland's Declaration of Independence, may come to be looked back on as signal days in Irish history. They were days of preparation. The youth of Nationalist Ireland had turned to a task — the task of learning — of learning first the Irish language, of learning then about Irish public affairs, and at the end of learning arms and about the handling of men.

The generation that became conscious twenty years ago turned with hope, faith and reverence to Gaelic Ireland. From the remnant of the Gaelic-speaking people they would learn what

civilization their country was capable of attaining to. Those who regarded themselves as the historic Irish nation were then rediscovering their origins and their achievements: they were Celts; they were of the race of Brennus and Vercingetorix, of Cuchullain and Maeve, of Columbanus and Scotus Eirigena; they were of the breed of the warriors who had shaken all empires although they had founded none; of the race of the missionary saints, and of the lovers of learning who had made themselves the patrons and protectors of European culture. The Ireland they willed would not be an autonomous West Britain, but a resurgent Gaelic nationality. And their race-dream was as fantastic perhaps as the race-dream of any other reviving people.

Those who mastered the Irish language began to learn it in classes spontaneously organized in the cities

and the villages, and they made themselves fluent by living with fishermen and small farmers in far islands and remote villages. Class-work made a comradeship between young men and women. Their first control was over classes and their first intervention in public affairs was from the lecture-platform.

Padraic Pearse was the first of the young men to be seriously spoken of in the Gaelic League. He had learned Irish in one of the few schools where it was then taught, and he took up Irish studies in University College, then part of the old Royal, and now part of the new National, University. He graduated from University College and was called to the bar.

Meanwhile he had mastered the language and had learnt about Gaelic life by living for long spaces of time in a cottage he owned in one of the poorest

districts of West Connacht. He was on the executive of the Gaelic League, then the most vital organization in Ireland. He became editor of the Gaelic League weekly *An Claidheamh Soluis* (The Sword of Light) and he announced his intention of making it "the organ of militant Gaeldom." He wrote articles continuously in Irish and English. During the years of his editorship his interest in education was shown in his intelligent advocacy of bi-lingualism in the schools. He went to Belgium on behalf of the Gaelic League and reported on bi-lingual instruction in that country.

He was grave, and if it were not for his kindliness and his humour, Padraic Pearse would have appeared as a sombre young man. His head was always slightly bent as though in deep, but never anxious, reflection. His ideas were so composed that, when he ad-

dressed you in conversation, parts of what he said might go into essays or lectures. He talked programmes. But nothing in his speech was dry or pedantic — so much enthusiasm — grave enthusiasm, indeed — was in all he said. All his programmes were for the recreation of a chivalry in Ireland.

He never spoke unkindly nor even slightingly of any person — neither did his brother, the even gentler William Pearse who was shot with him. He was first of all a Christian man. Although he was a fervent Catholic, and although the Gaelic was the culture he always looked to, his father was an Englishman who had been a Protestant. Padraic Pearse was unmarried and he lived with his simple and gentle mother, with his brother and his two sisters.

Eight years ago he decided to leave the office of *An Claidheamh Soluis* and put into practice his ideas of a national

Irish education. He took a big dwelling-house in Rathmines, a suburb of Dublin — Cullenswood House, where the historian Lecky once lived — and opened there a secondary school for boys — Sgoil Eanna or St. Enda's. The school was to be bi-lingual — that is to say, it was to give instruction through Irish as well as through English. The whole atmosphere of the school was to be Gaelic. On its formal side the school was to give an intermediate education and prepare students for entrance into the universities. Thomas MacDonagh was one of the well-known teachers he placed upon his staff. Two years afterwards he turned Cullenswood House into a girls' school, Sgoil Idé or St. Ita's and brought St. Enda's into the country — into a big eighteenth-century mansion with extensive grounds, known as the Hermitage, Rathfarnham. It is curious to note that St. Enda's and St.

Ita's were the only lay Catholic schools in Ireland.

A fresco painted in the hall of Cullenswood House represented the boy Cuchullain taking arms. The Druid warns him that whoever takes arms on that day will make his name famous but will die an early death. Around the fresco, in Old Irish, was Cuchullain's reply: "I care not if my life has only the span of a night and a day if my deeds be spoken of by the men of Ireland." That was the spirit Pearse wished to kindle in his boys. He published an occasional review in connection with his schools — *An Macaomh* (The Youth). He hoped it would become, not solely a school review, but "a rallying point for the thought and aspirations of all those who would bring back again in Ireland that Heroic Age which reserved its highest honor for the hero who had the most childlike

heart, for the king who had the largest pity, and for the poet who visioned the truest image of beauty." In the issue of *An Macaomh* for Christmas, 1909, he stated the ideas he was striving to propagate:

All the problems with which we strive were long ago solved by our ancestors, only their solutions have been forgotten. Take the problem of education, the problem, that is, of bringing up a child. We constantly speak and write as if a philosophy of education were first formulated in our own time. But all wise peoples of old faced and solved that problem for themselves, but most of their solutions were better than ours. Professor Culverwell thinks that the Jews gave it the best solution. For my part, I take off my hat to the old Irish. The philosophy of education is preached now, but it was practised by the founders of the Gaelic system two thousand years ago. Their very names for "education" and "teacher" and "pupil" show that they had gripped the heart of the problem. The word for "education" among the old Gael was the

same as the word for "fostering"; the teacher was a "fosterer" and the pupil was a "foster-child." Now "to foster" is exactly the function of a teacher; not primarily to "lead up," to "guide," to "conduct through a course of studies," and still less to "indoctrinate," to "inform," to "prepare for exams," but primarily to "foster" the elements of character already present. I put this another way in the first number of *An Macaomh* when I wrote that the true work of the teacher may be said to be to help the child to realize himself at his best and worthiest. One does not want to make each of one's pupils a replica of oneself (God forbid), holding the self-same opinions, prejudices, likes, illusions. Neither does one want to drill all one's pupils into so many regulation little soldiers or so many stodgy little citizens, though this is apparently the aim of some of the most cried-up of modern systems. The true teacher will recognize in each of his pupils an individual human soul, distinct and different from every other human soul that has ever been fashioned by God, miles and miles apart from the soul that is nearest and most akin to it, craving,

indeed, comradeship and sympathy and pity, needing also, it may be, discipline and guidance and a restraining hand, but imperiously demanding to be allowed to live its own life, to be allowed to bring itself to its own perfection; because for every soul there is a perfection meant for it alone, and which it alone is capable of attaining. So the primary office of the teacher is to "foster" that of good which is native to the soul of his pupil, striving to bring its inborn excellences to ripeness rather than to implant in it excellences exotic to its nature. It comes to this, then, that the education of a child is greatly a matter, in the first place, of congenial environment and, next to this, of a wise and loving watchfulness whose chief appeal will be to the finest instincts of the child itself. In truth, I think that the old Irish plan of education, as idealized for boys in the story of the Macradh of Emmhain and for girls in that of the Grianan of Lusga, was the wisest and most generous that the world has ever known. The bringing together of children in some pleasant place under the fosterage of some man famous among his people for his greatness of heart, for his

wisdom, for his skill in some gracious craft, — here we get the two things on which I lay most stress in education, the environment, and the stimulus of a personality which can address itself to the child's worthiest self. Then, the charter of free government within certain limits, the right to make laws and maintain them, to elect and depose leaders, — here was scope for the growth of individualities, yet provision for maintaining the suzerainty of the common weal; the scrupulous co-relation of moral, intellectual and physical training, the open-air life, the very type of the games which formed so large a part of their learning, — all these things were designed with a largeness of view foreign to the little minds that devise our modern makeshifts for education. Lastly, the "aite," fosterer or teacher, had as colleagues in his work of fosterage no ordinary hirelings, but men whom their gifts of soul, or mind, or body had lifted high above their contemporaries, — the captains, the poets, the prophets of their people.

Civilization has taken such a queer turn that it might not be easy to restore the old Irish plan of education in all its details.

Our heroes and seers and scholars would not be so willing to add a Boy Corps or a Grianan to their establishments as were their prototypes in Ireland from time immemorial till the fall of the Gaelic polity. I can imagine how blue Dr. Hyde, Mr. Yeats, and Mr. MacNeill would look if their friends informed them that they were about to send them their children to be fostered. But, at least, we can bring the heroes and seers and scholars to the schools (as we do at Sgoil Eanna) and get them to talk to the children; and we can rise up against the system which tolerates as teachers the rejected of all other professions, rather than demanding for so priest-like an office the highest souls and noblest intellects of the race. I think, too, that the little child-republics I have described, with their own laws and their own leaders, their life face to face with nature, their care for the body as well as for the mind, their fostering of individualities, yet never at the expense of the commonwealth, ought to be taken as models for all our modern schools. But I must not be misunderstood. In pleading for an attractive school-life, I do not plead for making school-life one long, grand

picnic; I have no sympathy with the sentimentalists who hold that we should surround children with an artificial happiness, shutting out from their ken pain and sorrow and retribution and the world's law of unending strife; the key-note of the school-life I desiderate is *effort* on the part of the child himself, struggle, self-sacrifice, self-discipline, for by these things only does the soul rise to perfection. I believe in gentleness, but not in softness. I would not place too heavy a burden on young shoulders, but I would see that no one, boy or man, shirk the burden he is strong enough to bear.

He goes on to say that the want of textbooks is one of the things that make bi-lingual teaching difficult in secondary schools. He announces that St. Enda's will soon have a series that will relieve the situation. "The first volume, a Geography of Ireland in Irish by Mr. MacDonnell, is ready for publication. It will be followed early in the new year by Parts I and II of

my Irish Conversation and Reading Lessons on the Direct Method, for which Mr. Edwin Morrow is making pictures. Then will come Book II of Virgil edited with an Irish commentary by Mr. O'Nolan, and later Mr. MacDonagh's School Anthology of Anglo-Irish Verse and my own School Anthology of Irish Verse."

After he took up teaching he connected all his literary efforts with his schools. One year he produced a heroic pageant "Cuchulainn," and another year a little religious play "Iosagan" (Jesukin). "In writing the Cuchulainn Pageant," he said, "I religiously followed the phraseology of the Tain. In 'Iosagan' I have as religiously followed the phraseology of the children and old men in Iar-Connacht from whom I have learned the Irish I speak. I have put no word, no speech, into the mouths of my little boys which

the real little boys of the parish I have in mind — boys whom I know as well as I know my pupils at Sgoil Eanna — would not use in the same circumstances." In 1911 he wrote a Passion Play in Irish and with his students and the staffs of his schools produced it at Easter in the Abbey Theatre. A year later he published his single book of verse, "Suantraidhe agus Goltraidhe" (Songs of Slumber and of Sorrow) written in the language of his Iar-Connacht parish. He had begun to put together in the pages of the *Irish Review* an anthology of poetry in the Irish language, making his own translations. Three of these translations are given in this collection, for into them, I believe, he put much of his own personality.

In the spring of 1913 he made a visit to America and raised some funds for his schools by lecturing on Irish

literature and on his own ideas of education. In the winter of 1913 the Irish Volunteers were organized. Pearse had already formed a corps of Boy Scouts. He was made one of the Executive of the Irish Volunteers. In the summer of 1914 Mr. Redmond demanded that an equal number of his nominees be placed on this Executive. Pearse was amongst the very small minority that were altogether against the Parliamentary Party being given any control. A few months afterwards the European war broke out.

"I am ready, for years I have waited and prayed for this day. We have the most glorious opportunity that has ever presented itself of really asserting ourselves. Such an opportunity will never come again. We have Ireland's liberty in our hands. Will we be freemen, or are we content to remain as slaves, and idly watch the final extermination

of the Gael?" He wrote these words in an article published just before the insurrection. There spoke the man who would walk steadily toward martyrdom. Pearse was a man of supreme value to Ireland. But he was the one who, when lives had to be ventured, would make the nearest approach to death. He was a mystic, and for him a cause would become a call. He would not spare himself and he would not spare those who went with him. He was the very type of the implacable idealist.

Those who saw Thomas MacDonagh in his academic robe and noted his flow of speech and his tendency to abstractions might have carried away an image of one of those adventurous students who disputed endlessly in a medieval university. But MacDonagh was as far from being a pedant as was Pearse. He was a wonderfully good comrade, an eager friend, a happy-hearted com-

panion. He had abundance of good spirits, and a flow of wit and humour remarkable even in a Munster man. He had, too, an intimate knowledge of the humours of popular life in the country and the country town which he never put into his writings. With his short figure, his scholar's brow and his dominating nose, he looked a man of the Gironde — a party, by the way, that he often spoke of.

He was born in Cloughjordan, a town in the County Tipperary, and his father and mother were teachers in primary schools. He was trained by a religious order, and was indeed a religious novice in early youth. He became a teacher in a college in Kilkenny and afterwards in Fermoy. While he was in Kilkenny he took up the study of Irish. Afterwards he went to the Aran Islands and to the Irish-speaking districts in Munster, and made himself

fluent in the language. He published some volumes of literary verse.

Just before Pearse opened his school, MacDonagh came to Dublin to look around him. He had written a play and wanted to have it produced in the Abbey Theatre, which was then under the brief direction of J. M. Synge. The play was "When the Dawn is Come." The scene is laid in a revolutionary Ireland of the future, and it is the tragedy of a leader whose master-idea baffled his followers. MacDonagh had joined the staff of St. Enda's when this play was produced.

I knew him from the year before he came to Dublin. His great interest then was poetry. He knew poetry well in English, French, Latin and Irish, and was drawn to the classical poets — to Catullus, Dante and Racine. After he came to Dublin the poetry he wrote was more personal. What he wrote in

the first four years is in "Songs of Myself."

When this book was published he went to Paris for a while to do some reading. Then he took his M.A. degree in the National University. A professor in the College of Science, with MacDonagh, James Stephens and myself started the *Irish Review*. MacDonagh was associate editor, first with the three of us, and after an interregnum, with his friend Joseph Plunkett. He wrote a thesis, "Thomas Campion and the Art of English Poetry," and was made assistant professor of English literature in the National University, Dublin.

His country was always in his mind but it did not fill it exclusively, as it might be said to have filled Pearse's mind. He would have welcomed a reasonable settlement of Irish political conditions from the government of Great Britain. Two years after its

angry rejection by the National Convention, he said to me that the country should have accepted the Councils Bill, with its control of education and its possibilities of checking financial relations between Ireland and Great Britain. I often had a vision of my friend in a Home Rule Parliament, working at social and legislative problems and perhaps training himself to become a Minister of Education. He was, when the Home Rule Bill reached its last stages, happily married, and was the father of the child he has addressed in "Wishes for My Son." Another child was born six months before the insurrection. In the end, the Home Rule question became something different from an adjustment of legislation as between Great Britain and Ireland. The English Conservative Party, with incredible folly, made its granting or its withdrawal a question

of military preparation and racial manliness. Those in Ireland who had conviction, courage and military organization would have their way, the Conservative press and the Conservative leaders declared, and all conviction, courage and military organization were on the anti-home rule side. Then the Nationalists created their Volunteers. Thomas MacDonagh had a place on the Executive and the command of a corps.

A poet with a bent towards abstractions, a scholar with a leaning towards philology — these were the aspects Thomas MacDonagh showed when he expressed himself in letters. But what was fundamental in him rarely went into what he wrote. That fundamental thing was an eager search for something that would have his whole devotion. His dream was always of action — of a man dominating a crowd for a great

end. The historical figures that appealed straight to him were the Gracchi and the Irish military leader of the seventeenth century, Owen Roe O'Neill. In the lives of these three there was the drama that appealed to him — the thoughtful man become revolutionist; the preparation of the crowd; the fierce conflict and the catastrophe. Many things Thomas MacDonagh said and wrote were extraordinarily prophetic. Most prophetic of all was his mental dramatization of the end of Tiberius Gracchus. At last he, too, had the ascendency over the crowd; he saw the conflict in the city, and he faced the vengeance of the capitalists and the imperialists.

One day about five years ago Thomas MacDonagh told me that a lady had called at the school to ask him to help her son at his Irish studies. The lady was Madame Plunkett. MacDonagh

consented, and his pupil, Joseph Mary Plunkett, became his admirer and his friend. Joseph Plunkett was often ill. He looked a youth who could do little more than be a reader and an onlooker. Yet he was working hard at verse and had taken up many out-of-the-way studies. McDonagh's great enthusiasm, the adventurousness of his mind, his unquenchable desire to be making and shaping things must have been vital influences on the younger, frailer man. Joseph Plunkett, for all his ill-health, had remarkable power of will. I saw him in New York in September, 1915, and I was impressed by the decision and command he had attained to.

In the fall of 1913, after he had published his book of verse, "The Circle and the Sword," he and Thomas MacDonagh took over the *Irish Review*. Afterwards they formed a little literary theatre and produced plays written in

their own circle, with some European masterpieces. Tchekof's "Uncle Vanya" was amongst the plays they produced. Like his friend MacDonagh he joined the Irish Volunteers on their formation, and he, too, had a command and a place on the Executive.

Joseph Mary Plunkett belonged to a Catholic branch of a family whose name was in Irish history for six hundred years. His people had remained loyal to the faith and the aspiration of the majority of the Irish people, and for that they had memories of dispossession and repression. But their most cherished memory was that of a martyrdom. The venerable Oliver Plunkett, the last priest martyred in England, was of their family. The young man who was shot to death in Dublin Castle was a mystic, but a militant mystic — his symbols were the eternal circle and the destroying sword. He would war

for Ireland, and he would have the Irish people make war out of "the anger of the Sons of God."

I have brought their history through the formation of the Irish Volunteers to the European war of 1914. The things which made so many in Ireland willing to venture revolt — the threat of conscription, the actual over-taxation, the danger of famine, the exasperation caused by unfair and clumsy administration — these things belong to political and not to personal history. Pearse, MacDonagh and Plunkett became members of a secret political society that had revolution for its object; — like the liberators of Greece and Bulgaria, they strove to bring about foreign intervention. They made a great immutable gesture. With the good and brave Connolly, with the steadfast Clarke, with Shaun MacDermott, "kindly Irish of the Irish," and with the upright

Eamonn Ceantt, who with them signed the declaration, they have passed away from our sight, and they have become part of the memory of Ireland.

In the poems here given of the poets mentioned; in the two poems by Roger Casement, and in the three translations made by Padraic Pearse, there is a unity. These are poems by Combatants. Their combat is passionate, intellectual, spiritual; in the end it exists for a country, and, to paraphrase the last line of Casement's sonnet, to win a rock where Celtic faith should bide its vow. No attempt need be made to estimate the achievement of the poets of this anthology. An Irishman knows well how those who met their deaths will be regarded —. "They shall be remembered for ever; they shall be speaking for ever; the people shall hear them for ever."

If poetry comes out of intensity of

vision Roger Casement was potentially a great poet. The vision that made him react so strongly to all forms of oppression brought him to aid the blacks of the Congo and the Indians of Putumayo. In places that it needs the imagination of Conrad to make us glimpse he faced poison and disease. The sight of his own declining country made him eager to shatter his career and his life on the perils of European diplomacy and the dangers of political combinations. His life has been all action and the poems he has written seem to be few. In some of the Irish journals he has published ballads about events in Irish history. The three poems of his given here appeared in the last numbers of the *Irish Review*. The sonnet on Hamilcar Barca seems to me to be as remarkable as an arch raised to celebrate some forlorn, forgotten triumph.

PADRAIC COLUM.

POEMS OF THE IRISH REVOLUTIONARY BROTHERHOOD

WAYS OF WAR

A terrible and splendid trust
Heartens the host of Inisfail:
Their dream is of the swift sword-thrust,
A lightning glory of the Gael.

Croagh Patrick is the place of prayers,
And Tara the assembling place:
But each sweet wind of Ireland bears
The trump of battle on its race.

From Dursey Isle to Donegal,
From Howth to Achill, the glad noise
Rings: and the heirs of glory fall,
Or victory crowns their fighting joys.

A dream! a dream! an ancient dream!
Yet, ere peace come to Inisfail,
Some weapons on some field must gleam,
Some burning glory fire the Gael.

That field may lie beneath the sun,
Fair for the treading of an host:
That field in realms of thought be won,
And armed minds do their uttermost:

Some way, to faithful Inisfail,
Shall come the majesty and awe
Of martial truth, that must prevail
To lay on all the eternal law.

Lionel Johnson

JOHN-JOHN

I dreamt last night of you, John-John,
And thought you called to me;
And when I woke this morning, John,
Yourself I hoped to see;
But I was all alone, John-John,
Though still I heard your call;
I put my boots and bonnet on,
And took my Sunday shawl,
And went, full sure to find you, John,
At Nenagh fair.

The fair was just the same as then,
Five years ago to-day,
When first you left the thimble men
And came with me away;
For there again were thimble men
And shooting galleries,
And card-trick men and Maggie-men,
Of all sorts and degrees;

But not a sight of you, John-John,
Was anywhere.

I turned my face to home again,
And called myself a fool
To think you'd leave the thimble men
And live again by rule,
And go to mass and keep the fast
And till the little patch;
My wish to have you home was past
Before I raised the latch
And pushed the door and saw you, John,
Sitting down there.

How cool you came in here, begad,
As if you owned the place!
But rest yourself there now, my lad,
'Tis good to see your face;
My dream is out, and now by it
I think I know my mind:
At six o'clock this house you'll quit,
And leave no grief behind; —
But until six o'clock, John-John,
My bit you'll share.

JOHN-JOHN

The neighbors' shame of me began
When first I brought you in;
To wed and keep a tinker man
They thought a kind of sin;
But now this three year since you're gone
'Tis pity me they do,
And that I'd rather have, John-John,
Than that they'd pity you,
Pity for me and you, John-John,
I could not bear.

Oh, you're my husband right enough,
But what's the good of that?
You know you never were the stuff
To be the cottage cat,
To watch the fire and hear me lock
The door and put out Shep —
But there, now, it is six o'clock
And time for you to step.
God bless and keep you far, John-John!
And that's my prayer.

Thomas MacDonagh

SONG FROM THE IRISH

(Tàid na rèalta 'na seasamh ar an aer)

The stars stand up in the air,
    The sun and the moon are gone,
The strand of its waters is bare,
    And her sway is swept from the swan.

The cuckoo was calling all day,
    Hid in the branches above,
How my stóirín is fled far away —
    'Tis my grief that I give her my love!

Three things through love I see,
    Sorrow and sin and death —
And my mind reminding me
    That this doom I breathe with my
        breath.

But sweeter than violin or lute
    Is my love, and she left me behind —

SONG FROM THE IRISH

I wish that all music were mute,
And I to all beauty were blind.

She's more shapely than swan by the strand,
She's more radiant than grass after dew,
She's more fair than the stars where they stand —
'Tis my grief that her ever I knew!

Thomas MacDonagh

ENVOI TO "SONGS OF MYSELF"

I send these creatures to lay a ghost,
And not to raise up fame!
For I shrink from the way that they go almost
As I shrink from the way that they came.

To lose their sorrow I send them so,
And to lose the joys I held dear;
Ere I on another journey go
And leave my dead youth here.

For I am the lover, the anchoret,
And the suicide — but in vain;
I have failed in their deeds, and I want them yet,
And this life derides my pain.

ENVOI TO "SONGS OF MYSELF"

I suffer unrest and unrest I bring,
And my love is mixed with hate;
And the one that I love wants another thing,
Less unkind and less passionate.

So I know I have lost the thing that I sought,
And I know that by my loss
I have won the thing that others have bought
In agony on this cross.

But I whose creed is only death
Do not prize their victory;
I know that my life is but a breath
On the glass of eternity.

And so I am sorry that I failed,
And that I shall never fulfil
The hope of joy that once I hailed
And the love that I yearn for still.

ENVOI TO "SONGS OF MYSELF"

In a little while 'twill be all the same,
But I shall have missed my joy;
And that was a better thing than fame
Which others can make or destroy.

So I send on their way with this crude rime
These creatures of bitter truth,
Not to raise up fame for a future time,
But to lay the ghost of my youth.

. . . . . .

And now it is time to start, John-John,
And leave this life behind;
We'll be free on the road that we journey on
Whatever fate we find.

Thomas MacDonagh

OF A POET PATRIOT

His songs were a little phrase
    Of eternal song,
Drowned in the harping of lays
    More loud and long.

His deed was a single word,
    Called out alone
In a night when no echo stirred
    To laughter or moan.

But his songs new souls shall thrill,
    The loud harps dumb,
And his deed the echoes fill
    When the dawn is come.

Thomas MacDonagh

DEATH

Life is a boon — and death, as spirit
and flesh are twain:
The body is spoil of death, the spirit
lives on death-free;
The body dies and its wound dies and
the mortal pain;
The wounded spirit lives, wounded
immortally.

Thomas MacDonagh

REQUIES

He is dead, and never a word of blame
Or praise of him his spirit hears,
Sacred, secure from cark of fame,
From sympathy of useless tears.

Thomas MacDonagh

THOUGH SILENCE BE THE MEED OF DEATH

Though silence be the meed of death,
In dust of death a soul doth burn;
Poet, rekindled by thy breath,
Joy flames within her funeral urn.

Thomas MacDonagh

WISHES FOR MY SON

Born on St. Cecilia's Day, 1912

Now, my son, is life for you,
And I wish you joy of it, —
Joy of power in all you do,
Deeper passion, better wit
Than I had who had enough,
Quicker life and length thereof,
More of every gift but love.

Love I have beyond all men,
Love that now you share with me —
What have I to wish you then
But that you be good and free,
And that God to you may give
Grace in stronger days to live?

For I wish you more than I
Ever knew of glorious deed,
Though no rapture passed me by

That an eager heart could heed,
Though I followed heights and sought
Things the sequel never brought:

Wild and perilous holy things
Flaming with a martyr's blood,
And the joy that laughs and sings
Where a foe must be withstood,
Joy of headlong happy chance
Leading on the battle dance.

But I found no enemy,
No man in a world of wrong,
That Christ's word of Charity
Did not render clean and strong —
Who was I to judge my kind,
Blindest groper of the blind?

God to you may give the sight
And the clear undoubting strength
Wars to knit for single right,
Freedom's war to knit at length,
And to win, through wrath and strife,
To the sequel of my life.

But for you, so small and young,
Born on Saint Cecilia's Day,
I in more harmonious song
Now for nearer joys should pray —
Simple joys: the natural growth
Of your childhood and your youth,
Courage, innocence, and truth:

These for you, so small and young,
In your hand and heart and tongue.

Thomas MacDonagh

O STAR OF DEATH

Mortalem Vitam Mors cum Immortalis Ademit

The earth in its darkness spinning
Is a sign from the gate of horn
Of the dream that a life's beginning
Is in its end reborn —
Dark symbol of true dreaming,
The truth is beyond thy seeming
As the wide of infinitude
Is beyond the air of the earth!
Death is a change and a birth
For atoms in darkness spinning
And their immortal brood.

The wisdom of life and death
As a star leads to the gate
Which is not of heaven or hell;
And your mortal life is a breath
Of the life of all, and your state
Ends with your hail and farewell.

Wisdom's voice is the voice
Of a child who sings to a star
With a cry of, Hail and rejoice!
And farewell to the things that are,
And hail to eternal peace,
And rejoice that the day is done,
For the night brings but release
And threatens no wakening sun.
    Other suns that set may rise
    As before your day they rose,
    But when once your brief light dies
    No dawn here breaks your repose.

I followed a morning star,
And it led to the gate of light,
And thence came forth to meet our night
A child and sang to the star.
The air of the earth and the night were
        withdrawn
And the star was the sign of an outworn
        dawn
That now in the æther was newly bright.

For sudden I saw where the air through space was gone
From the portal of light and the child and the sign o'er the portal —
The star of joy a mortal leading
In the clear stood holy and still,
And under it the child sang on.
I who had followed of happy will,
Knew the dark of life receding —
One with the child and the star stood a mortal.

The child sang welcomes of the gate of light —
Welcome to the peace of perfect night
Everduring, unbeginning!
Now let the mornings of the earth bring grief
To other souls a while in darkness spinning,
To other souls that look for borrowed light,
Desiring alien joys with vain belief.

Welcome and hail to this beyond all good,
Joy of creation's new infinitude,
That never will the spirit use
Another time for life, and yet
That never will the spirit lose,
Although it pass, but takes its debt
To life and time, and sends endued
With gain of life each atom soul
New fashioned to fulfil the whole.

O star of death! O sign that still hast shone
Out beyond the dark of the air!
Thou stand'st unseen by yearning eyes
Of mourners tired with their vain prayer
For the little life that dies,—
Whether holding that it dies
That all life may still live on
In its death as in its birth,
Or believing things of earth
Destined ever to arise
To a new life in the skies.

O STAR OF DEATH

Blinded with false fear, how man
Dreads this death which ends one span
That another may begin! —
Holding greatest truth a sin
And a sorrow, as not knowing
That when death has lost false hope
And false fear, begins the scope
Of true life, which is a going
At its end, and not a coming,
That the heart shrinks from the numbing
Fall of death, but does not grope
Blindly to new joy or gloom —
Shrinks in vain, then yields in peace
To the pain that brings release
And the quiet of the tomb.
O star of death! I follow, till thou take
My days to cast them from thee flake
on flake,
My rose of life to scatter bloom on bloom,
Yet hold its essence in the phial rare
Of life that lives with fire and air,—
With air that knows no dark, with fire
not to consume.

O STAR OF DEATH

I followed a morning star
And I stand by the gate of Light,
And a child sings my farewell to-night
To the atom things that are.

Thomas MacDonagh

AT THE END

The songs that I sing
Should have told you an Easter story
Of a long sweet Spring
With its gold and its feasts and its glory.

But the haste of the years
Had rushed to the fall of our sorrow,
To the waste of our tears,
The hush and the pall of our morrow.

Thomas MacDonagh

LULLABY OF A WOMAN OF THE MOUNTAIN

O little head of gold! O candle of my house!
Thou wilt be a guide to all who travel this country.

Be quiet, O house! And O little grey mice,
Stay at home to-night in your hidden lairs!

O moths on the window, fold your wings!
Cease your droning, O little black chafers!

LULLABY OF A WOMAN OF THE MOUNTAIN

O plover and O curlew, over my house
do not travel!
Speak not, O barnacle-goose, going over
the mountain here!

O creatures of the mountain, that wake
so early,
Stir not to-night till the sun whitens
over you!

P. H. Pearse

(*Translated from the Irish by Thomas MacDonagh*)

IDEAL

Naked I saw thee,
O beauty of beauty!
And I blinded my eyes
For fear I should flinch.

I heard thy music,
O sweetness of sweetness!
And I shut my ears
For fear I should fail.

I kissed thy lips,
O sweetness of sweetness!
And I hardened my heart
For fear of my ruin.

I blinded my eyes,
And my ears I shut,
I hardened my heart
And my love I quenched.

IDEAL

I turned my back
    On the dream I had shaped,
And to this road before me
    My face I turned.

I set my face
    To the road here before me,
To the work that I see,
    To the death that I shall meet.

P. H. Pearse

(*Translated from the Irish by Thomas MacDonagh*)

THE WORLD HATH CONQUERED, THE WIND HATH SCATTERED LIKE DUST

(From the Irish)

The world hath conquered, the wind
hath scattered like dust
Alexander, Cæsar, and all that shared
their sway.
Tara is grass, and behold how Troy
lieth low —
And even the English, perchance their
hour will come!

P. H. Pearse

(See note, Page 69)

TO DEATH

I have not gathered gold;
The fame that I won perished;
In love I found but sorrow,
That withered my life.

Of wealth or of glory
I shall leave nothing behind me
(I think it, O God, enough!)
But my name in the heart of a child.

P. H. Pearse

(*Translated from the Irish by Thomas MacDonagh*)

TO DEATH (II)

Long (seems) to me your coming,
Old herald of God,
O friend of friends,
To part me from my pain!

O Syllable on the wind!
O footstep not heavy!
O hand in the darkness!
Your coming seems to me long.

P. H. Pearse

(*Translated from the Irish by Thomas MacDonagh*)

THE DIRGE OF OLIVER GRACE

(*From the Irish of Seaghán MacWalter Walsh*)

A dusky mist is on every hill,
A mist that hath never come before;
There is a mournful silence in the noon-tide
Broken by the heavy voice of sorrow.

The death knell sounds upon the wind,
To us, alas, a messenger of grief!
The black raven with hoarse note
Proclaims the hour of the dead.

Is it for thee, young noble one of my heart,
The *bean sidhe* hath sorrowfully wailed?
In the lonely quiet midnight
Full pitifully she lamented.

Every wall and rampart answered her
Mournfully, sadly, with its echo;
The cock hath not crowed according to
his wont,
Nor proclaimed to us time or season.

Alas, young Oliver of my heart,
'Tis thy death that she keeneth;
'Tis it that turneth day to night,
'Tis it that bringeth sorrow to men.

Now, my grief! we have nought
In the place of the good man but weeping and tears,
Shedding of tears, and crying, and weeping
Is our portion henceforth, and break of heart.

Alas, O death, thou hast struck down
forever
The blossom and beauty of our highest
branch,—

My grief, no victory would satisfy death
But the going to the grave of our people's
leader.

In clash of swords his hand was stout
To guard the right of his kin and kith,
Under the banner of his own noble father
And Ormond's banner that found fame
afar.

Baile na Cuirte was not wont to be
Under cloud of sorrow that could not be
lifted,
Its faithful lord with his heart in anguish
For the young man's death that was
gracious in accomplishments.

His name's true heir, its pride and
ornament,
Heir of his house in every airt in Ire-
land,
Like the oaken tree comely to be seen
He promised to fling far his branches.

Yet that was not in destiny for the kindly man,
But to go to the grave alone, all lonesome,
Alas, 'tis a long woe in his day
And a heart's grief to his spouse forever.

She is a mother heavy in affliction
Whose mate hath gone full early into the clay,
Her children's father, her first beloved,
Alas, 'tis she hath tasted sorrow!

Never again will he follow the deer
In dusky glens or on misty hills,
His horn will not be heard sweetly blowing
Or the voice of his hounds on the mountain ben.

He will not be seen on a swift young horse
Clearing a road over fosse and fence,—

His comeliness is forever changed,
On his majesty hath fallen a mist.

His gift-giving hand lieth still,
His gallant heart is dead and lifeless, —
Seed of soldiers, friend of poets,
Love of the loud-chanting music-makers.

The light of poesy thy fame needeth not,
Yet it will emblazon on high my grief,
As I shed tears at each day's end
On the soldier's tomb for whom my heart is heavy.

P. H. Pearse

(*See note, Page 69*)

ON THE FALL OF THE GAEL

(*From the Irish of Fearflatha O'Gnive*)

Woe is me for the Gael!
Seldom a mind joyous
At this hour among them, —
All their noble are perished!

A symbol one giveth of them:
The remnant of a slaughter
Tortured by pain of their wounds,
Or a wake-watch returning,

Or a barque's crew that a sea hath whelmed,
Or a band sentenced to death,
Or thralls in Gall's fetters,
Irish under outlanders!

They have bartered strength for weakness,
Comeliness for uncomeliness,

Courage for cowardice, —
Hailed as heroes no longer.

. . . . . .

To the men of Fódla 'tis grief
That foreign oxen have ploughed
In place of their studs of slim steeds
Every green field of Ireland.

Gall-troops in their chiefs' meadows,
White towers where stood their strongholds,
Market-places in every countryside,
Ricks on the heights of their hostings!

Lugh's Isle knoweth not
Any of her spacious green fields,
Smooth hills after the slaughter:
Free Ireland will be an England!

The tribe of the Gael knoweth not
Banba, nurse of their heroes,
And Ireland knoweth not them,—
They are both transformed.

. . . . . .

ON THE FALL OF THE GAEL

Woe that the King of Heaven's Rath
To lead us from bondage
Hath not sent us a new Moses,
Tribe of battle-greedy Criomhthann.

O Trinity that hath power,
Shall this race be always in exile,
Farther off from Conn's city,
Or shall we have a second glory?

Shall the prophecy come true
For the host of grim strangers
Of the saintly seer of Conn's race,
The pure patriarch Colm?

If Thou hast consented
That there be a new England named
Ireland,
To be ever in the grip of foes,
To this isle we must say farewell!

. . . . . .

P. H. Pearse

(*See note, Page 70*)

FOR HIS MOTHER'S CONSOLATION

(*Written before his own and his brother's execution*)

Dear Mary, that didst see thy first born Son
Go forth to die amid the scorn of men
For whom he died,
Receive my two dear sons into thy arms
Who also have gone out to die for men,
And keep them by thee till I come to them.
Dear Mary, I have shared thy sorrow,
And soon shall share thy joy.

P. H. Pearse

WHITE DOVE OF THE WILD DARK EYES

White Dove of the wild dark eyes,
Faint silver flutes are calling
From the night where the star-mists rise
And fire-flies falling
Tremble in starry wise,
Is it you they are calling?
White Dove of the beating heart,
Shrill golden reeds are thrilling
In the woods where the shadows start,
While moonbeams, filling
With dreams the floweret's heart,
Its sleep are thrilling.
White Dove of the folded wings,
Soft purple night is crying
With the voices of fairy things
For you, lest dying
They miss your flashing wings,
Your splendorous flying.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

THE GLORIES OF THE WORLD SINK DOWN IN GLOOM

The glories of the world sink down in gloom,
And Babylon and Nineveh and all
Of Hell's high strongholds answer to the call,
The silent waving of a sable plume.
But there shall break a day when Death shall loom
For thee, and thine own panoply appal
Thee, like a stallion in a burning stall,
While blood-red stars blaze out in skies of doom

Lord of sarcophagus and catacomb,
Blood-drunken Death! Within the columned hall
Of time, thou diest when its pillars fall.

Death of all deaths! Thou diggest thine
own tomb,
Makest thy mound of Earth's soon-
shattered dome,
And pullest the heavens upon thee for a
pall.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

WHEN ALL THE STARS BECOME A MEMORY

When all the stars become a memory
Hid in the heart of Heaven: when the sun
At last is resting from his weary run,
Sinking to glorious silence in the sea
Of God's own glory: when the immensity
Of nature's universe its fate has won
And its reward: when Death to death is done
And deathless Being's all that is to be —

Your praise shall 'scape the grinding of the mills:
My songs shall live to drive their blinding cars
Through fiery apocalypse to Heaven's bars!
When God's loosed might the prophet's word fulfils,
My songs shall see the ruin of the hills,
My songs shall sing the dirges of the stars.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

POPPIES

O Sower of sorrow
From the seed of your sowing
Tomorrow the mower
The wheat will be mowing.

O Reaper of ruth
Mid the roots of your reaping
Springs the truth that in sleep
Bears the fruit of all sleeping.

O Binder of sheaves
That are loose for your binding,
Withered leaves you shall find
And shall lose after finding.

Joseph Mary Plunkett.

THE DARK WAY

Rougher than death the road I choose
Yet shall my feet not walk astray,
Though dark, my way I shall not lose
For this way is the darkest way.

Set but a limit to the loss
And something shall at last abide,
The blood-stained beams that formed
the cross,
The thorns that crowned the crucified;

But who shall lose all things in One,
Shut out from Heaven and the Pit
Shall lose the darkness and the sun,
The finite and the infinite;

And who shall see in one small flower
The chariots and the thrones of might

Shall be in peril from that hour
Of blindness and the endless night;

And who shall hear in one short name
Apocalyptic thunders seven
His heart shall flicker like a flame
'Twixt Hell's gates and the gates of
Heaven.

For I have seen your body's grace,
The miracle of the flowering rod,
And in the beauty of your face
The glory of the face of God,

And I have heard the thunderous roll
Clamoured from heights of prophecy,
Your splendid name, and from my soul
Uprose the clouds of minstrelsy.

Now I have chosen in the dark
The desolate way to walk alone
Yet strive to keep alive one spark
Of your known grace and grace un-
known;

And when I leave you lest my love
Should seal your spirit's ark with clay
Spread your bright wings, O shining
Dove —
But my way is the darkest way.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

THE EYE-WITNESS

Blind, blind, blind —
O you that witness speak,
Shout to us from the peak
Of seeing, shout on the wind.

Down in the depths of the dark
Helpless we grope and crawl —
To our last despairing call,
Eye-witness, hark!

We have made this pit,
We have shut out the light,
Perpetuating the night
And all the horrors of it.

And we'd have dragged you down
To the lowest depths of all
But that you would not fall
At our feet, while you held the crown.

You nor sold your name
Buying the right to live
Nor took what we would give
For your faith, to feed the flame.

Doom, doom, doom, —
We drove you away with blows,
Drove you where no man knows
But you, a gleam in the gloom.

At your coming the dark fled away.
All was alive with light —
But on us the perpetual night
Fell down and slew the day.

Now we cannot see
Whether we live or die,
But you — stoop from the sky,
Stoop and tell of the tree

Stretching to light above
From this hell's darkness below,
Tell what you see and know
Of the tree of death and love.

Lean from the golden bars
And if what we seek you find,
Shout what you see to the blind,
Shout down from the stars.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

I SEE HIS BLOOD UPON THE ROSE

I see his blood upon the rose
And in the stars the glory of his eyes,
His body gleams amid eternal snows,
His tears fall from the skies.

I see his face in every flower;
The thunder and the singing of the birds
Are but his voice — and carven by his power
Rocks are his written words.

All pathways by his feet are worn,
His strong heart stirs the ever-beating sea,
His crown of thorns is twined with every thorn,
His cross is every tree.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

1847-1891

The wind rose, the sea rose,
A wave rose on the sea,
It sang the mournful singing
Of a sad centenary:

It sang the song of an old man
Whose heart had died of grief,
Whose soul had dried and withered
At the falling of the leaf:

It sang the song of a young man
Whose heart had died of pain
When Spring was black and withered
And the Winter came again.

The wind rose, the sea rose,
A wave rose on the sea,
Swelled with the mournful singing
Of a sad century.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

1867

All our best ye have branded
When the people were choosing them,
When 'twas Death they demanded
Ye laughed! Ye were losing them.
But the blood that ye spilt in the night
Crieth loudly to God,
And their name hath the strength and
the might
Of a sword for the sod.

In the days of our doom and our dread
Ye were cruel and callous,
Grim Death with our fighters ye fed
Through the jaws of the gallows;
But a blasting and blight was the fee
For which ye had bartered them,
And we smite with the sword that from
ye
We had gained when ye martyred them!

Joseph Mary Plunkett

THE STARS SANG IN GOD'S GARDEN

The stars sang in God's garden,
The stars are the birds of God;
The night-time is God's harvest,
Its fruits are the words of God.

God ploughed his fields in the morning,
God sowed his seed at noon,
God reaped and gathered in his corn
With the rising of the moon.

The sun rose up at midnight,
The sun rose red as blood,
It showed the Reaper, the dead Christ,
Upon his cross of wood.

For many live that one may die,
And one must die that many live —
The stars are silent in the sky
Lest my poor songs be fugitive.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

OUR HERITAGE

This heritage to the race of kings:
Their children and their children's seed
Have wrought their prophecies in deed
Of terrible and splendid things.

The hands that fought, the hearts that broke
In old immortal tragedies,
These have not failed beneath the skies,
Their children's heads refuse the yoke.

And still their hands shall guard the sod
That holds their fathers' funeral urn,
Still shall their hearts volcanic burn
With anger of the Sons of God.

No alien sword shall earn as wage
The entail of their blood and tears,
No shameful price for peaceful years
Shall ever part this heritage.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

YOUR FEAR

I try to blame
When from your eyes the battle-flame
Leaps — when cleaves my speech the
spear
For fear lest I should speak your name.

Your name, that's known
But to your heart, your fear has flown
To mine — you've heard not any bird,
No wings have stirred save yours alone.

Alone your wings
Have fluttered: half-forgotten things
Come crowding home into your heart,
Filling your heart with other Springs:

YOUR FEAR

Springs when you've sung
Your secret name with happy tongue
Loudly and innocent as the flowers
Through hours of laughter proudly
young.

Young is the year
And other wings are waking: near
Your heart my name is knocking loud —
Ah, be not proud! You need not fear.

Fearing lest I
Should wrest your secret from on high
You will not listen to my name —
I cannot blame you though I try.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

STRIFE

Because I used to shun
Death and the mouth of Hell,
And count my battle won
When I should see the sun
The blood and smoke dispel;

Because I used to pray
That, living, I might see
The dawning light of day
Set me on my way
And from my fetters free;

Because I used to seek
Your answer to my prayer,
And at your soul should speak
For strengthening of the weak
To struggle and despair;

Now I have seen my shame
That should thus deny
My soul's divinest flame;
Now shall I seek to die
By any hands but these;
In battle or in flood
Or any lands or seas
No more shall I share ease,
No more shall I spare blood;
When I need to fight
For Heaven or for your heart,
Against the powers of light,
Or darkness, I shall smite
Until their might depart;

Because I know the spark
Of God has no eclipse,
Now Death and I embark
And sail into the dark
With laughter on our lips.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

IN THE STREETS OF CATANIA

(*"The streets of Catania are paved with blocks of the lava of Ætna."*)

All that was beautiful and just,
All that was pure and sad
Went in one little, moving plot of dust
The world called bad.

Came like a highwayman, and went,
One who was bold and gay,
Left when his lightly loving mood was spent
Thy heart to pay.

By-word of little street and men,
Narrower theirs the shame,
Tread thou the lava loving leaves and then
Turn whence it came.

Ætna, all wonderful, whose heart
Glows as thine throbbing glows,
Almond and citron bloom quivering at start,
Ends in pure snows.

Sir Roger Casement

HAMILCAR BARCA

Thou that did'st mark from Heircte's spacious hill
The Roman spears, like mist, uprise each morn,
Yet held, with Hesper's shining point of scorn,
Thy sword unsheathed above Panormus still;
Thou that wert leagued with nought but thine own will,
Eurythmic vastness to that stronghold torn
From foes above, below, where, though forlorn,
Thou still hadst claws to cling and beak to kill —
Eagle of Eryx! — when the Ægatian shoal

Rolled westward all the hopes that Hanno wrecked,
With mighty wing, unwearying, did'st thou
Seek far beyond the wolf's grim protocol,
Within the Iberian sunset faintly specked
A rock where Punic faith should bide its vow.

Sir Roger Casement

LOST YOUTH

Weep not that you no longer feel the tide
High breasting sun and storm that bore
along
Your youth in currents of perpetual song;
For in these mid-sea waters, still and wide,
A sleepless purpose the great deep doth
hide.
Here spring the mighty fountains, pure
and strong,
That bear sweet change of breath to
city throng,
Who, had the sea no breeze, would soon
have died.
So, though the sun shines not in such a
blue,
Nor have the stars the meaning youth
devised,
The heavens are nigher, and a light
shines through —

The brightness that nor sun nor stars
sufficed,
And on this lonely waste we find it true
Lost youth and love not lost, are hid
with Christ.

Sir Roger Casement

THE SONG OF RED HANRAHAN

The old brown thorn trees break in two
high over Cummen Strand,
Under a bitter black wind that blows from
the left hand;
Our courage breaks like an old tree in a
black wind and dies,
But we have hidden in our hearts the
flame out of the eyes
Of Cathleen, the daughter of Houlihan.

The wind has bundled up the clouds high
over Knocknarea,
And thrown the thunder on the stones for
all that Maeve can say.
Angers that are like bundled clouds have
set our hearts abeat;
But we have all bent low and low and
kissed the quiet feet
Of Cathleen, the daughter of Houlihan.

THE SONG OF RED HANRAHAN

The yellow pool has overflowed high up on
Clooth-na-bare,
For the wet winds are blowing out of the
clinging air;
Like heavy flooded waters are our bodies
and our blood;
But purer than a tall candle before the
Holy Rood
Is Cathleen, the daughter of Houlihan.

W. B. Yeats

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NOTES

By Padraic H. Pearse

The World Hath Conquered.

Just as in early Irish manuscripts, Irish love of nature or of nature's God so frequently bursts out in fugitive quatrains of great beauty, so in the seventeenth and eighteenth century manuscripts we find Irish hate of the English expressing itself suddenly and splendidly in many a stray stanza jotted down on a margin or embedded in a long and worthless poem.

The Dirge of Oliver Grace.

Oliver Grace, heir of the old baronial house of Courtstown (Baile na Cúirte), County Kilkenny, died in 1604. Seaghán Mac-Walter Walsh was son of Walter Walsh who was chief of his clan, "Walsh of the Mountains." The dirge has the simplicity and the sincerity which so many later dirges want.

On the Fall of the Gael.

Fearflatha O'Gnive was Hereditary Bard to O'Neill of Clanaboy. He was of the train of Seaghán an Diomais when he visited Queen Elizabeth in 1562. Sir Samuel Ferguson has given a vigorous but very free metrical translation in his "Lays of the Western Gael." I print only twelve of twenty-four quatrains.

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